

Basics of a Main Street Organization

Overview

The “typical” Main Street organization comprises three basic elements: a board of directors that oversees the direction of the organization; committees that address the components of the Main Street Approach; and a manager who coordinates the activities of the board and committees.

Board of Directors

What’s their function?

- Generate and update an overall plan for building a vibrant downtown
- Approve committee workplans and specific projects
- Adopt and update a budget
- Generate and maintain community support for building a better downtown
- Hire and supervise a local Main Street manager

Dos and don’ts for Board members

Board members should:

- *Participate* in board meetings (i.e., come prepared)
- Empower the manager
- Promote Main Street in the community
- Take on (oversee) specific projects

Board members should not:

- Just show up for board meetings
- Control (micro-manage) the manager
- Dump everything on the manager
- Assume that you only have to participate in board meetings

Some things to keep in mind

- Board members should know the Main Street Approach, inside and out.
- Keep board meetings OPEN. Post notices. Invite the public and media to board meetings.
- Recognize the divergent styles of communication and interaction among board members.
- Focus on the “greater good.” Don’t exploit Main Street to achieve your personal or organizational agenda.
- Build local constituencies. Maintain a presence with the city council, chamber of commerce, etc. Tell them what you’re doing, and ask for their input.
- Be patient. Remember that we’re looking three to five to seven years down the road.

Committees

What's their function?

- Develop projects and workplans
- Recruit volunteers, as necessary

Dos and don'ts for committee members

Committee members should:

- Commit to taking on projects/tasks
- Work in partnership with the manager
- Coordinate with other committees

Committee members should not:

- Turn over projects/tasks to the manager
- Operate in isolation from other committees and/or the board

Design

General Purpose

Work to restore the “landscape” and historic character of downtown. Enhance downtown’s pedestrian environment while addressing impacts of automobiles.

Design Issues/Projects

- ✓ Promote the value of restoring downtown’s historic character
- ✓ Provide assistance to property owners to rehabilitate their buildings through workshops, architectural assistance, incentives, etc.
- ✓ Develop a downtown “master plan” and public improvements plan
- ✓ Work with city government to develop appropriate tools to achieve design goals (incentives, ordinances, etc.)
- ✓ Work with appropriate entities on parking and traffic management

Promotion

General Purpose

Reposition downtown as a viable commercial center. Develop messages that communicate downtown’s value to various “target markets.” Identify most effective means for communicating those messages.

Promotion Issues/Projects

- ✓ Develop and update information on market segments
- ✓ Evaluate and refine existing promotion activities/events
- ✓ Develop new promotion strategies/initiatives, as needed

Business Growth

General Purpose

Work to create and sustain an environment for business growth in downtown. Generate a downtown market analysis and work with business owners to capitalize on opportunities identified by the analysis. Develop long-term business recruitment plan.

Business Growth Issues/Projects

- ✓ Develop and update information regarding opportunities for business growth
- ✓ Provide assistance to business owners to capitalize on opportunities
- ✓ Identify non-retail opportunities, including housing
- ✓ Develop long-term plan for mix of downtown uses

Organization

General Purpose

Maintain volunteer base and generate funding. (The role of the Organization Committee is often taken up by the Board of Directors.)

Organization Issues/Projects

- ✓ Develop a “roster” of potential volunteers by committee/project
- ✓ Develop an inventory of potential funding sources
- ✓ Develop, implement, and update a strategic funding plan

Manager

What's his/her function?

- Coordinate projects (planning, implementation, resources)
- Provide administrative oversight
- Serve as a Main Street liaison with media, community groups, etc.

Dos and don'ts for the manager

The manager should:

- *Coordinate* projects
- Implement certain projects
- Obtain resources for projects
- Serve as program liaison in community

The manager should not:

- Run the program
- Implement the entire workplan
- Act as a glorified secretary
- Respond to the directives of individual board member

Utah Main Street

What's Utah Main Street's function?

- Provide training
 - Creating and sustaining a Main Street organization
 - Hiring and keeping a Main Street coordinator
 - Developing, implementing, and updating a workplan for downtown revitalization
 - Provides support for the coordinator
 - Training
 - Periodic workshops for coordinators
- Assist with implementation of workplan
 - Technical assistance (consultants)
 - Funding assistance
- Provide funding for program administration (\$10,000/year for three years)
- Establish connections with national activities
 - National Main Street Network membership
 - Scholarships for National Town Meeting